

them, is inclined to regard their "beauty as being somewhat too artificial, too elaborate. One may well prefer the panorama of the quays of Paris in "L'GEuvre," the picture of daybreak at the central markets in "Le Ventre de Paris," the *descente* and the *rentree* of the workers in "L'Assommoir," and the march of the pitmen in "Germinal."

In the former instances the spectacle which Zola sets before the reader has a vividness that leaves a lasting impression;

in the latter you are borne along with the crowds which the author has conjured forth, you can see and hear their tramp, the sensation of motion being rendered with a skill which few writers have ever equalled. Further, as a superb example of the horrible blended with the pathetic, one may cite the wonderful description of the death of little Charles, in "Le Docteur Pascal."

"Germinal/' "L'Assommoir," " La D4Mcle," and "La Terre " are ranked as the four pillars of the Eougon-Mac-quart series. From a purely literary standpoint the first is superior to the second, because it contains less slang. The use of slang in dialogue is often advisable, even necessary ; but in narrative and descriptive passages it is difficult to defend it unless the story be told in the first person by one who habitually speaks slang. Zola had some such idea in writing " L'Assommoir " (which he pictured as a book about the people by one of them), but shrank

from carrying it to its logical conclusion, and the result, in a literary sense, was not quite pleasing.¹ However, both "Germinal"

¹ In writing "L'Assommoir" Zola did not merely consult the existing slang dictionaries. The scene of the story was laid at half an hour's walk from his own home. He prowled the whole neighbourhood for weeks, observing and listening; and before he set pen to paper he prepared a little slang lexicon for his own use, one which may some day be published. He kept this com-